

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTICES.

Monographia Heliceorum Viventium. Auctore LUDOVICO PFEIFFER, Dr.
Leipsic : London, Williams and Norgate.

AFTER the lapse of many years, this long-announced publication has at length made its appearance. The well-known lengthened researches of the author, and his personal inspection of the typical specimens in the chief museums and more important private collections of Europe, have excited a more than ordinary feeling of interest respecting it,—a sentiment which the profound knowledge of his subject displayed by him in his intercourse with conchologists during his recent visit to England has by no means tended to allay. It is solely by that undivided attention to one particular branch of natural history, which has been devoted to the investigation of the Snails by Dr. Pfeiffer, that the unravelling of that tangled mass of synonyms, which the presumptuous ignorance of tyros and the careless indolence of compilers have alike generated and fostered, can successfully be attempted; and the author's comparison of types and frequent correspondence with other writers upon conchology combine in giving a stamp of authority to his labours. The first part only of this monograph of Helices is as yet before the public: we learn however from the accompanying prospectus that the remainder will be issued at no distant interval, and that the entire work will occupy two octavo volumes. In 160 pages are contained diagnoses of between four and five hundred species of shells; the total number intended to be described is 2100. This is an immense increase to our knowledge of this family, the aggregate species of the several genera included by our author under *Helix* amounting in the pages of Lamarck to 224, of the second edition of the 'Animaux sans Vertèbres' by Deshayes to 536, and in Férussac's great work to 573. The following genera are regarded by Dr. Pfeiffer as coming within the limits of his work: *Anostoma*, *Tomigerus*, *Streptaxis*, *Odontostoma* (*Proserpina*), *Helix* (including *Carocolla* and *Nanina*), *Bulinus*, *Achatina*, *Pupa*, *Cylindrella*, *Daudebardia*, *Vitrina*, *Succinea*, *Balea*, *Tornatellina*, and *Clausilia*. As no less than 1132 species belong to *Helix* proper, a very elaborate sectional arrangement is proposed for facilitating their determination; without which assistance indeed, the toil of searching through some hundreds of descriptions in ascertaining the name of a single specimen, would be insufferably tedious. And yet this praiseworthy subdivision is neglected in the majority of conchological monographs which are annually appearing!

The language in which the results of the author's observation and reflection during a period of ten years (as he informs us) is communicated to his readers, is that universal medium of communication among naturalists, the Latin tongue; not sparingly used for brief diagnoses, betraying too often the writer's inability to express himself satisfactorily and lucidly in it, followed by longer notes in his vernacular explanatory of his meaning, but written throughout in that classic dialect, without the interpolation of a single word of his

native speech. This will doubtlessly ensure it a widely extended circulation; the practice of each individual writer describing his supposed new species in his own particular language, of course limiting the perusal of his work to those conversant with that tongue, and entailing great confusion (where the work is not illustrated) through foreigners reproducing the species under other appellations through a justifiable ignorance (since a knowledge of all the tongues of Europe cannot be expected from any man, and their acquisition would leave but little leisure to be devoted to the study of nature) of their prior publication.

It is perhaps to be regretted that no plates accompany the letter-press, the references being frequently to unpublished (at least they have not as yet reached us in England) figures in Kuster's costly and bulky edition of Chemnitz's 'Conchylien Cabinet,' a book, whose protracted periodical issue and the rudeness of execution in its earlier plates, combined with the comparative want of research displayed by the editor in the earlier portion of it, have almost excluded it from our libraries in England, and rendered us ignorant how much valuable matter is engulfed in the more recent numbers, wherein indeed a very considerable number of hitherto unpublished species have of late appeared. An atlas of engravings after the fashion of Rossmäslers's 'Iconography of the European Land and Freshwater Shells,' and produced at a similar moderate charge, would prove a most valuable companion to Dr. Pfeiffer's text, and would not (we believe) be unappreciated by the public.

In conclusion we may state, that there is throughout exhibited a sound and practical acquaintance with conchological literature, particularly with that of England; and with a singular frankness, such species as the author has himself been unable to recognize are indicated by a symbolic mark. This latter proceeding may appear unimportant, yet how many difficulties could be solved, were we thus enabled to ascertain the exact extent of an author's acquaintance with the established species previous to his constitution of new ones!

Fauna littoralis Norvegiæ, oder Beschreibung und Abbildungen neuer oder wenig bekannten Seethiere, nebst Beobachtungen über die Organisation, Lebensweise u. Entwicklung derselben von M. Sars, Doctor der Philosophie, &c. Erstes Heft, mit 10 Kupfertafeln. Christiania, 1846.

The first number of a very interesting work which we are anxious to recommend to the support of British zoologists. It is written in the German language with the characters of the new genera and species in Latin: it is in folio, and this number contains 94 pages and 10 plates, well-engraved and uncoloured. The species illustrated are—

1. *Syncoryna Sarsii*, Löw.
2. *PODOCORYNA*, a new genus, = *Hydractinia* of Van Beneden; and the *P. carnea*, Sars, is very probably the same as the *Hydractinia rosea*, Van Beneden.